THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) and (b) A series of measures were announced in the Finance Minister's budget speech 2002-2003 to give major boost to agriculture sector and the Government have taken appropriate follow-up action such as credit linked subsidy scheme for construction of rural godowns, initiation of. steps for asking State Governments to amend their APMC laws; higher allocation for the Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme; amendment in Milk and Milk Product Order to remove restrictions on new milk processing capacity while continuing to regulate health and safety conditions; relaxations for higher credit flow to small and marginal farmers; additional release of 88.76 lakh Kishan Credit Cards alongwith personal insurance package during 2001 - 2002; setting up of a Task Force to oversee the setting up of Agriculture Insurance Corporation; removal of restrictions on export of agricultural products except onion, niger seed and wood; setting up of 28 Agri-Export zones, promotion of agriculture extension through 261 Krishi Vigyan Kendras and new extension guidelines and reducing custom duty on agricultural machinery and implements.

(c) Does not arise.

Impact of India joining UPOV

313. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned, "Move to join UPOV will affect farmers' rights", appearing in 'Hindu' dated 7th June, 2002;

(b) if so, whether Government's decision to join UPOV has been widely criticized by the eminent researchers in the field of agriculture;

(c) if so, whether Government propose to reconsider their decision and not join UPOV, in the interest of the farmers; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) 'Gene Campaign' a non-governmental organization, has criticized the proposal to accede to the UPOV Convention. 1978 Act.

(c) and (d) Joining UPOV would be in the interest of our farmers as this would, *inter-alia,* facilitate greater investment in research for the development of new plant varieties; in order to ensure the availability of quality seeds to farmers; obviate the need to enter into a large number of bilateral agreements with other countries for mutual recognition of plant breeders' rights; enable Indian plant breeders to secure protection in all Convention countries with minimal formalities and costs, etc.

Utilization certificates for agricultural schemes

314. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is compulsory for the State Governments to submit utilization certificates, proposals and project reports to take benefits of the Centrally sponsored schemes for agricultural development;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the State Governments which have not submitting reports regularly; and

(d) the steps taken by Government against such State Governments?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI HUKUMDEO NARAYAN YADAV): (a) to (d) The information is being obtained and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Export cost of agricultural products

315. DR. AKHILESH DAS:
SHRI AIMADUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU):

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any new strategy has been evolved to reduce export cost of agricultural products, to provide direct assistance to farmers and make their products more competitive;

(b) if so, the details of the new strategy and how it marks an improvement over the earlier agri-exports strategy; and

(c) the improvement in agri-exports registered during the last three months, as compared to corresponding period last year?